

The Long Con

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/11825853) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/11825853>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham , Hannibal Lecter , Bedelia Du Maurier , Matthew Brown (Hannibal) , Abigail Hobbs
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Thieves , Con Artists , Hannibal is Not a Cannibal , hell he's not even a real doctor , Manipulative Will Graham , Will Graham is a Tease , they are both big big teases , Abigail is Hannibal's hacker , Deception , Teasing , Sexual Tension , Slow Burn , Eventual Romance , Manipulative Hannibal , Eventual Relationships , Making Out , Sneaking Around , Sneaking , Sneakiness
Language:	English
Collections:	Uwu
Stats:	Published: 2017-08-17 Completed: 2017-09-19 Words: 19,039 Chapters: 10/10

The Long Con

by [harleygirl2648](#)

Summary

There are two kinds of cons: long and short. Short cons mean short-term gain, with smaller rewards, mostly just everything you have in your pocket at that moment. Long cons mean lots of time, effort, costumes, masks, props, sets, and other characters all looking to set up the downfall of the mark and take them for all that they've got.

Con Artist/Thieves AU: Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter are both interested in acquiring a Botticelli, but both of them are quite fond of each other's short games. For both of them, it's the deception and thrill of the game that's worth more than the payout.

And well, after all, aren't the easiest people to scam are those who think they are smart enough to *not* get scammed?

Notes

So this is what happens when I take my two favorite shows (Hannibal and Leverage), put them in a blender with a dash of my other ships of Coldwave and Batcat (there's a theme with my ships, aren't there?), and blend it on high at three in the morning.

Get ready for chapters of teasing, flirting, arguing, thievery, con artistry, wallet-snatching, and sass on sass on sass!

Chapter 1

“Nice job,” Will snarls as the cell door shuts behind them. “A rookie move, tapping the walls for silent alarms in broad damn daylight.”

“Unfortunately, I will inform you that it was *your* deliberate brush against the glass to test for its own silent alarm system that led to your personal downfall,” as Hannibal’s swift reply.

There couldn’t have been a *worse* way to be introduced to your new cellmate after having noticed them out of the corner of your eye at the museum. And that your cellmate was doing the same thing as you, testing for alarms and allowing yourself to be caught simply to examine the inside of the police station in the event they should actually be caught during the real break-in.

On the other hand, it isn’t often you meet someone with similar interests and tastes in art. Botticelli over a Monet and a Van Gogh? Excellent taste, Hannibal would give him that.

But now here they were, stuck together in a cell, and in need of an escape plan. Well, first things first: introductions.

“Hannibal Lecter,” Hannibal offered as he sat down on the bench, making sure that the other officers were away from their cell. The camera swept back and forth across the length of cells and didn’t have a microphone attached. Will looked back over at him with an amused smile.

“Will Graham,” he said back. “Aren’t we a pair?”

“Quite. Precisely why I usually work alone.”

“You and me both,” Will laughed, leaning up against the wall and shrugging before smiling over at Hannibal. “Rookie mistake.”

“I’ve been doing this for quite a long time, just not in this city.”

“Me too, I was in Louisiana before. You?”

“New York.”

“Big leagues, huh? Baltimore’s a hell of a place to get caught in.”

“At least I was graced with your presence, my stay here has not been a total loss.”

“Charming,” Will said, deadpan. “So. You have a plan to get out of here with a clean slate? Or you calling for a lawyer?”

“I have a plan to leave this place,” Hannibal says, folding one leg over the other, and returning the smile. “And perhaps it’ll get you out of here as well. I’ll require a phone, however.”

A spark appears in Will's eye, who nods, straightening his posture. "One phone, coming up."

Then, he closes his eyes, and swallows a few times, stretching his neck like he has a kink in it, and Hannibal watches as sweat appears at his brow and he seems to develop a bit of a nervous twitch. Then he opens his eyes, looking paler and more nervous than he had appeared the entire time they had spent together. He goes up to the bars, calling out, "H-Hey? Hey! Can I get a snack or something, my blood sugar's getting *really* low. I'm hypoglycemic, you know!"

There's a groan from one of the officers just down the hallway, then the sound of him getting up.

"How do you know he'll have his phone?" Hannibal asks.

"I kept hearing a cricket text tone, just soft enough that I can hear, but won't carry all the way to the boss's office. Idiot should have left it on vibrate," Will murmurs, slipping right back into character when the officer approaches with a crumbled Fiber One bar. He passes it through the bars, and Will swallows hard, coughing a bit so a fleck of spit ends up on the officer's face. He apologizes profusely and as the officer is distracted, Will slips his fingers into his pocket and retrieves the wallet, passing it over to Hannibal as a tissue covers the officer's eyes for two seconds. Hannibal keeps the phone hidden under his leg as Will finishes the bar, handing the wrapper back and requesting a glass of water. The officer sighs audibly, but turns to leave anyway. Almost immediately, Will turned his back on him and looks at Hannibal.

"Two minutes at most," he says. "What do you need the phone for?"

Hannibal stands up. "Back against the wall, if you please."

"Wow, buy me dinner first," Will smirks, in mock surprise, but does as Hannibal says.

"Now, don't smile."

Will holds one back and pretends to look disinterested as Hannibal snaps a picture, then immediately sending it as a text to a number with a message. As soon as it is sent, he deletes the text in the phone, hands it back to Will, and then sits back down.

Thirty seconds.

"What was that for?" Will whispers harshly.

"Buying time for our alibis," Hannibal replies, then quieting as the officer returns with a cup of water. Will takes well over four minutes drinking the water, taking up the officer's time as much as possible. When he finishes and passes the cup back, Hannibal speaks up: "I really don't see why we are being held here, sir. My patient and I have not done a thing wrong."

"*Patient?*" the officer asked, surprised. As he made eye contact with Hannibal, Will carefully slid the phone back into his pocket. "What - what -"

Hannibal's eyes narrowed, "Yes, *my patient*. I am a doctor, did I not make myself clear beforehand?"

The officer opened his mouth to let him just how clear he thought he was when another officer came up behind him. "Let 'em out, Pearson, you've got the wrong pair."

"But, Moshos, they were-"

"Both spotted by *one* unconfirmed witness," Moshos sighed. "And besides, we looked them up and found this."

He held up two pieces of paper, one bearing pictures of both Hannibal and Will, with fake names and identification, and the other, a patient chart and schedule. "Dr. Cartier, our sincerest apologies. Your secretary confirmed that you and Mr. Beaumont-" he nodded over to Will "-were at an appointment yesterday, in your office. There was obviously a mix-up, we are sorry."

"Thank you," Will breathed out, fanning himself, sweat starting to appear on his brow as he rocked back and forth on his heels, swallowing hard. "Wow, it's - it's a little warm in here, don't you-"

"My patient has hypoglycemia," Hannibal said, getting up and resting a hand on Will's shoulder to give the appearance of comfort as he shook and apparently tried to regain focus. "And has been having trouble with his medication, we're having it tweaked. Would it be too much to go to the nearest-"

"Yes, yes, so sorry about this," Moshos said hurriedly, unlocking the cell door and allowing the both of them to leave.

"You're luck I don't *sue* on behalf of the both of us," Hannibal says haughtily, leading the both of them out, his hand still on Will's shoulder, perhaps a little tighter than necessary. *Just for the con, of course.* And it wasn't until they were just out of sight of the station that Hannibal removed his hand and Will straightened up, brushing the hair out of his eyes. He gave Hannibal an impressed smile.

"Wow," he said, pausing in their stride to lean against a mailbox on the side of the road. "Nice job, *doctor*. I nearly believed it myself. Are you even a real doctor?"

"I have degrees in psychology, chiropractic practices, nursing, primary care, optometry, a surgical license-"

"Any of them actually *real*, though?" Will asked, quirking an eyebrow. Hannibal found it in himself to smile through a mock glare.

"Well, if there were an emergency, I would advise calling 911," he said in return, and Will chuckled. "However, I mostly deal in art."

"How interesting," Will noted, "as I *myself* am looking to branch out into the art scene."

“Apparently so. I do have to tell you that Botticelli’s *Judith Leaving the Tent of Holofernes* is a piece I have been looking to acquire for *years*, so please do not impede my plans for it, thank you.”

“What a coincidence, doctor,” Will said, cocking his head to the side. “I was looking at the very same piece.” He stood back up straight, adding, “Unfortunately, they’re going to keep it under wraps now, until they’ve done all the authenticity tests. Should take at least a month. We’re both at a loss.”

“I don’t count today as a loss,” Hannibal answered back. “If anything, it’s confirmed a few suspicions about the local department and their security measures. I count that as surveillance. Thank you for the phone.”

“I’m glad I could be of service,” Will said, teeth catching on his lower lip as he smirks. Hannibal offers his hand for a shake.

“A truce, then. I won’t interfere in your practice as long as you leave mine alone.”

Will nods, clicking his tongue with an *of course*, and they shake on it.

Each of them knows damn well that other one has their fingers crossed on the opposite hand behind their back.

“See you around, *doctor*,” Will drawls as he walks off. Hannibal grins to himself as he begins walking in the other direction.

Abigail took an obnoxiously loud sip from her can of Redbull, her feet up on her desk as she played with her mouse with one hand as Hannibal knocked on her door. “It’s open!” she yelled out. He opened the door, three slices of her favorite brand of pepperoni-sausage-banana pepper pizza abomination on a plate for her. He even brought her the hot sauce to pour on it, though he hoped to leave the room before she did so. The pizza wasn’t a crime in and of itself, it needed runny hot sauce to make it even more wretched. Sometimes he wondered if she had these eating habits on purpose so that he could leave her in peace to do her work.

“A thank-you for you quick work today,” he says, setting the plate down on her desk. She rolled her eyes.

“You had better have a damn good reason for getting yourself caught in the dumbest way possible, *and* making me use my secretary voice and number, *and* making me fake medical records for some cute guy.”

He narrowed his eyes. “I was *casing*, thank you very much.”

“Sure, whatever you say. Did you like the name *Beaumont*, I thought it suited his jawline.”

“I don’t pay you to make jokes, Abigail,” Hannibal remained, sitting down on the chair next to hers.

“For twelve grand a week and bonuses for your jobs, I am allowed to joke,” she shot back, tapping her mouse once and pulling up a flyer. “Alright, this is an invitation to the opening of the Botticelli exhibit, on the twenty-sixth. That's exactly a month and three days away. It is *strictly* invitation only, and they will keep count of how many go out, how many RSVP, and how many people may come anyway. Due to you fucking up today, I suggest getting close to the museum owner, making some donations, a few luncheons, that sort of thing. There's a gala on the fourteenth for low-tier donors that you should attend, boost up the *upstanding* reputation. Are you going to call Bedelia to grift with you?”

“She'll want a cut of the job,” Hannibal sighed. “And the *last* time-”

“Yeah, you both really play up the *bickering couple* thing well. Almost as though you *aren't* acting,” she shot back. He glared, and she didn't falter. “That doesn't scare me, you know.”

“A pity. To think, I had all of your student loans paid,” Hannibal said sarcastically.

“That was almost a joke, good for you,” Abigail grinned, clicking her mouse again to pull up a zoomed image of Will Graham at the museum, not far from where Hannibal had been standing. “About ‘Mr. Beaumont’, I can do some digging, send his info to the cops if he starts getting close to the painting before you.”

Hannibal looked over the collected face of the man on the screen and remembering how *perfectly* he had executed the signs of a man in distress to the point where of Hannibal, without a conscience, almost began to pity him. How *easily* he had removed and placed back a sturdy cell phone within the time constraints of a constantly-switching camera angle, all while the man didn't even feel it.

Will Graham was an excellent grifter, and thief, and he had fine taste in art. He was a worthy opponent.

“No,” Hannibal said finally. “I think I'd like to see him try to steal *my* painting.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Short little chapter, but I wanted a little more up before I start getting into the nitty gritty.

Hannibal smiled into his latte, nodding a greeting to the marketing director, Jeanne Kelly, as she sat across from him at the gallery café. “Jeanne, lovely to see you as always.”

“Same to you, Dr. Cartier,” she smiled, ripping open a pack of sugar to pour into her Thermos of jasmine tea. “It’s been a while, hasn’t it?”

“I was doing business in New York,” Hannibal replied, folding his arms across the table in a gesture of warmth and friendship. It worked nearly every time. “I was selling a few of bits of my collection upstate, it took far longer for the authenticity results it come about.”

Jeanne sighed. “I completely understand, our Botticelli had better be ready for the twenty-sixth, do you understand the level of canape prep this damn event is taking?”

“Well, you always manage to find the absolute best catering for these galas.”

“Thank you,” she preened. *Easy*. “Honestly, I’m going to have to drop this caterer, he tried to tell me that salmon roe was ‘just as good’ as sturgeon caviar.”

“A crime,” Hannibal readily agreed, even as his attention slightly diverted to the Botticelli exhibit curator deep in conversation with another man in the corner of the cafe. He was desperate to go over and get under his skin. So he asked Jeanne: “I heard that Philip is in charge of the new exhibit, is that true?”

“He is, you do your homework, Julian,” she smiled, taking a sip of coffee. “He’s so pleased with his new position, I hope it doesn’t go to his head.”

It better, the idiot already thinks he should own the whole gallery, Hannibal thought, keeping his mask on. “Well, tell him for me that I hope all goes well. I plan to be there opening day.”

“Aren’t you attending the donors’ gala the night before?” Jeanne asked, surprised. “Who else will extol the virtues of Vivaldi with me?”

“I would be honored, Jeanne, but I’m afraid I haven’t received an invitation yet.”

“Well, I’ll remedy yet. My favorite donor and his plus one are always welcome here,” she smiled, getting up and noticing Phillip in the corner. “Oh, there he is. He’s having a coffee date with some professor, fan of his work, you know. Between you and me—” she said in a

whisper “-I can’t believe anyone could slog through a very long, very boring analysis of *Madonna with Child*. But here, you can tell him your appreciation now.”

“You’re too kind,” Hannibal smiled, standing as well and following him over to Philip, only for him to firmly keep it together as his guest stood and turned around to greet him.

“Ah, Dr. Cartier! Good to see you again. This is Professor Rowan, from Louisiana State.”

“A pleasure, doctor,” Will Graham said, in a thick Southern accent that just rolled off of his tongue as he extended his hand for a shake. “Any friend of Phillip is a friend of mine, after all.”

“Mr. Rowan,” Hannibal nods, shaking his hand for the second time in two days. “What brings you all the way from Louisiana?”

“Hurricane season’s the best time to travel,” Will offers with a shrug. “And I’m on a research year from the school, and thought I’d finally meet Phillip face-to-face, we’ve been in email conversations for months over his excellent treatise-”

“-On the *Madonna*, yes, I myself am quite a fan,” Hannibal said, flashing a quick smile. Will’s eyes have that spark in them again, and Hannibal can’t help but notice the loose-fitting suit that fits the sweet-as-pie professor demeanor.

“It’s nice to know we both appreciate art,” Will smirks. It’s then that Philip and Jeanne have to leave for a meeting, and everyone thanks each other for the pleasant conversation. As soon as they’ve left the cafe and gone on their separate ways, Will and Hannibal walking off into one direction, Will’s demeanor collapses and he goes back into his normal slouching stance. “Thank god you walked over, one more minute on brush strokes and I would have had a stroke.”

“Of course,” Hannibal says, pausing in their stroll to fix Will with a look. “And you just happen to know Philip.”

“I’ve been planning this heist for months,” Will fires back. “I’ve been forging trust for months. You aren’t getting in my way.”

“Unfortunately, I’ve been a known donor for years, I already have an invitation to the gala,” Hannibal says, aware this is devolving into a juvenile argument. He can’t deny that he doesn’t enjoy it, though. “It would appear you are out of luck.”

Will smirked, holding up a card. “Don’t need an invitation. Typical absent-minded art guy, he can’t remember his own passwords, keeps them written down, in his left suit pocket. Who needs an invitation when I have keys?”

“How clever,” Hannibal says, deadpan. “And if I like, I can have all of your information sent to the police and have you taken out of my way.”

“Ah, but you forget,” Will said, *tsking* in an irritating fashion. “You got us *both* out of jail with your lie. I go back there, I’ll tell them you’re not who you claimed to be. I go down, I’ll

take you with me.”

Hannibal narrowed his eyes, and Will narrowed his right back, smirking. “It’s been a *pleasure*, doctor,” he says in a voice with a deep underlying purr. It’s unfair and rude and Hannibal really does hate him. He does, no matter what Abigail says. Will walks off and Hannibal turns right around and leaves in another direction, that purr rolling around in his head.

Will finally meets up with Matthew, who tosses his broom to the side (to really *sell* the fake janitor disguise) and stalks over. “What took so fucking long?” he barks out.

“Shut up,” Will snarls back. “I’m wearing them down, and I’ve got the passwords.”

“This job is worth ten mil,” Matthew spat. “I get testy when there’s that much money on the fucking line.”

“Well, cool your fucking jets, I’ve got it handled. You just do surveillance, that’s what I’m paying you for,” Will bit back. “So let me handle it, and you keep your mouth shut. Or you can go back to penny-ante jobs.”

Matthew rolled his eyes, and gathered up his equipment and went to go get the car. Will sat down at one of the benches in the outside garden, and reached into his pocket for the piece of paper. When he found it, he opened it up to read it, and was met with a message in beautiful script:

I moved the passwords to your back pocket. Shouldn’t brag about pickpocketing to an expert.

Will let out an incredulous laugh. He wondered when the good *doctor* would notice the fishing lure pinned to his lapel.

(It was at home, and Abigail had to point it out.)

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Oh my god, I think I like you...

(brownie points for the song reference!)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Will Graham," Abigail had said, pulling up file after file with pictures and all. "Has an uncanny knack for knowing how to play off of the mark by looking through their eyes and knowing where their weak spots are for the perfect con. Dabbles in everything from pickpocketing to petty theft to scams to full-on heists, biggest payoff worth at least a million. Favorite covers include a killer British accent, writers, journalists, law enforcement-"

"And professors?"

"Yeah," Abigail had said, giving him a look. "How did you-"

"Not important, carry on."

"Well, he's very slippery. A lot like you, moves around from place to place. He's good, very good. So, you want me to send this info to your friends at the station?"

"No," Hannibal had said, eyes fixed on the little smirk on Will's face in one of the pictures partially obscured by sunglasses and a downturn expression. "No. I'm...curious...what he'll do."

"Curiosity killed the cat."

"And satisfaction brought it right back."

Will was surprised to see Hannibal Lecter coming up to him after his lecture, and rest his hand across the podium. Still, he kept up his appearance, and smirked right back at his smug expression.

"Nice to see you, doctor," he said in greeting, drawing out the word *doctor*. "Didn't know you had an interest in criminal profiling."

"I have interests in many fields, Mr. Graham. However, I did not expect to see you giving the lecture," Hannibal answered right back. He really *did* dislike him, even if he was a little amusing.

"Well, Professor Rowan does have a degree in criminal psychiatry," Will said as though he were speaking to a child. "I have to keep up appearances, you know."

"I see," Hannibal, straightening his posture to regain his slight height advantage.

"See, that was a subtle power move to establish dominance of this situation," Will noted, snapping his briefcase shut. It was brown and worn, matching the faded plaid button-down and simple pants. All the appearance of a mild-mannered professor interested in minds capable of far more than his own, and it was a *brilliant* performance. "And your eyes narrow slightly when you're annoyed, and see, *there* you strain your neck to get just a *bit* more height over me."

"Are you truly a profiler?" Hannibal asks, following Will out of the classroom. "You have a gift for it."

"That's the first genuine compliment you've ever paid me," Will notes, his fingers curled around the handle of the briefcase. "It sounds...*unnatural*."

"Just being polite," Hannibal says, his words coming through his teeth. "I'll give you credit where it's due. However, I did not appreciate the fishing lure on my suit jacket the other day."

"You're only bitter because it clashed with your tie," Will said, an exaggerated pout on his face. "Boo hoo. I thought it was funny, unlike the note you put in my pocket."

"That *was* amusing," Hannibal responds, trying to not devolve into a childlike argument with someone he - he *despises*, that's the word. He's too smug, too *smart*, and he *knows* it, and Hannibal cannot *stand* it, no matter *what* Abigail says.

Will finally turns around to give Hannibal his apparent full attention, but Hannibal notices something first.

"You have problems with eye contact, in private conversation, however, *not* with a mark," Hannibal notes, and Will's jaw clenches and he smiles incredulously. It's satisfying, catching him at his own little game. "Interesting, considering our line of work where eye contact is a necessity."

"Using that psychiatry degree?" Will practically spits out. Oh, he hates this smug bastard, who thinks he has every single card and predicate who can do what.

"Well, at least I *have* one. As authentic as your police badge you have in your back left pocket."

"Sarcasm is a weapon of the weak, you know."

"Perhaps that is why you use it so often."

“Did our meeting today have a purpose?” Will says through his teeth. “Or have you just come to waste my time?”

“I expect you’ll be at the charity function this evening,” Hannibal says a non answer. Will is getting really fucking tired of these.

“Of course,” Will says, fake sweetness dripping from his words. “I’m such a supporter of... of...”

“Libraries.”

“Right, *libraries*. Education is important,” Will says, rolling his eyes. “And to think, I was truly looking forward to it until this *exact* moment. What a shame.”

Hannibal barely holds back a sneer. “As was I. Well, I do have to be on my way, to...*prepare* for this evening.”

“Aw, you have to *prepare*. I’ve already cased it,” Will smiles, with nothing but contempt in his eyes. “Well, as always, it’s been a *pleasure*, doctor.”

Will refuses to call him anything other than *doctor*.

Hannibal hates that he doesn’t mind that one bit.

The phone was ringing.

The phone was ringing and Abigail had to check her Post-It to remember who she had to be on Line 3 as Hannibal poured over blueprints of the gallery. She cleared her throat and picked up the receiver, answering in a chipper tone: “Dr. Cartier’s office, this is Janet speaking. How may I help you?”

“*Janet*.” The voice on the other end was smooth, and very, very smug. “This is...Mr. Beaumont? I’m calling about my blood sugar medication. I’m sure either *you* or *him* know what I mean.”

Her face dropped, and she scowled. “Please hold.” Clapping her hand over the receiver, she handed it to Hannibal. He looked up.

“What is it?”

“Your one and *only* patient. Mr. Beaumont,” she said, popping the *T* and smiling a very fake smile. “I don’t know how he got your number, unless you gave it to him. Oh, did you? Because that would be a real step in-”

“No,” Hannibal said flatly, accepting the phone at last, and speaking into it, unamused. “Mr. Graham.”

“So my blood sugar’s low, doc, what would you-”

“How did you get this number?”

“Your business card,” Will said innocently, leaning against his refrigerator at his apartment.

“I didn’t give you my card.”

“Shouldn’t leave it in your wallet. The driver’s license photo is terrible, is that on purpose?”

Hannibal’s grip tightens on the phone and he resists hanging up. “What do you need, Mr. Graham?”

“Ten million dollars. Or a Botticelli on my wall. Either works for me. Anyway, I was just calling to let you know that I have your number now. Don’t bother calling the police, remember? I go down, I’ll take you and...*Janet* with me.”

“Noted. Good evening, Mr. Garham.”

“See you later, *doctor*. ”

Hannibal finally hung up, and noticed Abigail biting her lip as she furiously typed away. “What is it?”

“What is what, Hannibal?”

“What has you amused?”

“Oh,” she said with a slight head tilt in his direction. “You’re so into that.”

“Excuse me?”

“This little cat-and-mouse, push-pull, give-take thing you have with Beaumont, or, Graham, or whoever he is. You love this.”

“And to think, you didn’t make yourself a psychology degree.”

Abigail held down the backspace as she gave him a very knowing look that he did not appreciate. “I just have eyes and ears, Hannibal.”

Bedelia gets out of the car, already pissed that they had to park near the end of the lot, and hikes up her dark purple dress to avoid getting it under her heels. Fuck this, she shouldn’t have worn stilettos, even if this was a simple surveillance job. She rolled her eyes as Abigail fed information through their earpieces.

“Are we *really* going to be told how to do our jobs by-” her quiet, scornful tone was cut off by Abigail.

“You know I can fucking hear you, right? And I made up your last three identities, including a last will and testament from your late husband Earl that made you an heiress by marriage. And I’m twenty-six, not a child, Bedelia.”

Bedelia rolled her eyes and so did Hannibal. Abigail cursed mentally, as she could practically hear them. *“Now listen, I have access to every camera in this wing right now. The room adjacent to this one will house the Botticelli exhibit-”*

“We understand,” Hannibal said, in a clipped tone.

“Wow, everyone's so bitchy today, relax. And this time, can both of you be the adults in this scenario and at least tolerate each other's presence?”

“I won’t even stand next to him to avoid a break in character,” Bedelia says, smiling blankly at Hannibal and reluctantly taking his arm as they walk through the door. She drops it as soon as they’re inside, and she pulls out her drink ticket for a glass of wine. “I’m getting a drink and picking out my next mark. I’ll meet up with you in half an hour.”

Hannibal nods, accepting a flute of champagne from the nearest waiter, and starting to pace around the slightly kitschy decorations and thank-yous from adorable children’s drawings. He scans the room, and catches on the painting on the wall on the far left. It’s worth far much less than any of the other works in the gallery, much larger, as well, and placed at a lower angle than the rest, even so that the others around it are lowered to give the appearance that this was the plan of the original interior design. Hannibal takes steps in that direction, nodding and smiling greetings to others around him. When he makes it to the nearest wall, he leans as close as he can to the wall to hear any sounds. It’s quiet. So then he makes it to the wall where the painting are lower, and he smiles as, underneath the music being piped in through the sound system the sound of construction going on in the next room. It’s much louder than simply hearing it through the wall. There was a hole knocked into it, and it wasn’t going to be fixed in time for this gathering. So, a sloppy rearrangement of artwork later, and *ta-da*, it’s as though nothing’s ever happened. Honestly, this museum doesn’t even deserve a Botticelli, Hannibal thinks to himself, finishing the flute off and turning to set it on a table. He looks back up and sees Will Graham.

Hannibal hates that his first thought that Will cleans up very nicely, in a crisp, pressed suit. *Damn him.*

But he watches as Will finishes slipping something into a waiter's pocket and then turning around, picking a tempura shrimp off of a plate and dipping it in the sweet-and-sour sauce. As he walks behind Phillip, he drops a little of the dip on the back of his jacket before quickly eating the appetizer. He taps Phillip on the shoulder, gesturing with an apologetic look to the mess on his jacket, and Phillip tsks, looking to reassure him, and Will helps the jacket off while beckoning the waiter from earlier over. By now, Hannibal has walked close enough to hear the words.

“...a little stain, if you could go and clean this off-”

“Of course,” the waiter says, smiling (clearly fake), shifting his tray of hors d'oeuvres to one hand while accepting the jacket, and Hannibal catches Will slipping a card out of Phillip’s

wallet, hidden under the coat, and the waiter slides it under the tray before accepting the coat.

“Hannibal!”

It almost startles him. “Abigail, what is it?” he murmurs.

“What are you doing? You’re supposed to be testing the density of the wall. I turned off the silent alarms, you know.”

“Yes, yes, just a moment,” he says under his breath, deliberately walking in the path of the waiter. The waiter smiles brightly, and offers the whole tray.

“Here you go sir, knock yourself out. ‘Scuse me.”

Hannibal smiles graciously, accepting the tray, and making sure that his thumb slides the card right out from under the waiter’s grasp, then walking away without even looking back. He leaves the tray on a table, and makes his way over to Will.

Will doesn’t notice Hannibal’s presence, too involved with his glass of whiskey, until he feels to sharp edge of an ID card tapping once on his shoulder. He turns to Hannibal’s barely-smug expression, and Phillip’s ID card held in between his fingers.

“Quite a ruse,” Hannibal says, sliding the card into his pocket. “I’m impressed.”

“You sure sound like it,” Will snapped, finishing his drink in one go to turn around and give Hannibal a look. “So, found anything yet?”

“A thief.”

“Oh, so you looked in the mirror?”

“And their partner in crime.”

“I saw her, too, what’s her role in this? Your wife? She’s not good at pretending, I saw you both come in. You look like you can’t stand each other.”

“She is an excellent grifter,” Hannibal says, wishing another flight of champagne would come his way. “And no, we are not involved except in our line of work.”

“And what is it that you do, doctor?” Will asks, his smile almost real enough to be believed. Hannibal suddenly reached out and grabs Will’s wrist, just as Will is retrieving the card from his pocket. Will’s laugh is mixed with the hint of a snarl as he squeezes his wrist harder, “Shit, doc-tor, can’t break my wrist out here, everyone’ll see, and I can scream *very* loud.”

Hannibal twists his wrist once more time before letting go and nodding in the direction of the fire escape. They both know official policy is that the doors are locked and armed, but if you’re in the know, during events, they’ll be left unlocked for patrons to go out and smoke. No one has used the door, it’s private.

Abigail's voice comes out loud and clear through the earpiece. "*Hannibal*," she hissed, and he can hear typing and clicking. "*What are you doing, where are you going? Literally, all you have to do is put one of my little cameras, and stick it just behind and under the frame, where are you g-*"

"Not now, dealing with a problem," he hisses under his breath, pushing the door open and allowing Will to go first. As soon as the door closes and the cool night air washes over them, their masks and fake identities drop.

"You're really starting to *piss* me off," Will snarls, lips twitching up in annoyance as he watches Hannibal drop the card into the breast pocket of his suit. "You're like a damn cat, always popping up places and preening underneath all of the attention."

"And you're like a dog, nipping at heels, looking for the scraps of the actual meal that fall from the table."

"Luckily for me," Will says, leaning against the brick exterior of the outside, "I happen to love dogs."

Hannibal's arms are at his side, aware he is pushing himself up higher like Will had remarked earlier that day, hating that someone can read him this easily. "You are absolutely *infuriating*, interfering with my plans, my painting, there are hundreds of other pieces to choose from, and if it's the money-"

Will throws his head back and just laughs. It's - *pleasant*. Hannibal was not anticipating this. "Do - do you really think - no, no, of *course* you don't, you're like me. You're smarter than that."

"Smarter than what?" Hannibal asks, mentally shushing the hiss of Abigail telling him to go back inside and finish the job already.

Will straightens up against the wall, so that they are making direct, unflinching eye contact. Hannibal is not quite certain if this is yet another mask.

"Because you're like me," Will laughs, again, knowingly. "It's not the fucking *painting* that's got you interested. It's not even the money. That might be what your partners are after but that's not what it's in it for you."

Hannibal moves closer, effectively blocking an escape path. "And what is it, that is more important than the painting or the money?"

Will, to his part, moves even closer, resting his hand on Hannibal chest, trailing his fingers down his tie and saying in a voice just a purr like his parting words at their first meeting: "It's the fucking *thrill of the game*, isn't it? It's the-"

Really, Hannibal's not sure who moves first. Either Will does in an attempt to throw Hannibal off track, or Hannibal does in an effort to finally shut Will up.

Either way, they've ended up against the wall of the museum, kissing (*making out, really*) and well, this is *much better* than knocking the other party's teeth out.

Hannibal's hand has moved down to Will's hipbone while the other one slides into his hair and finally he can comb back those damn curls that have been on his mind since he brushed them out of his eyes in their jail cell, and he can feel Will's snarl-laugh against his lips and his hand squeezing his shoulder hard and he's pressed *right* up close against him, and it's a *lot* happening all at once and really he's ready to just leave this gallery altogether with his grip on Will's wrist again and-

- and then Will's slipped out from under Hannibal's grasp, ducking under his arm and knocking him to the side before fleeing down the stairs for all of seven seconds while Hannibal has to recenter himself for the first time since - alright, for *the* first time. Then, he moves over to the side of the fire escape and looks down to see Will leaning against the bottom of the railing, looking back up with the most shit-eating grin on his face.

Hannibal grins back without a second thought.

"Was that an accurate analysis, *doctor*?" Will asks, his head cocked to one side. "I *am* a profiler, after all."

"Spot-on," Hannibal says, playing along as he tries to smooth out his suit. "I already mentioned how impressed I was earlier today."

"I know," Will says. "I just like to be told that. And no, don't make that 'you're like a *dog* comment' again."

"I wouldn't dream of being that rude."

"How kind. I do have to be going now, I've got some work to do," Will says, flicking the identification card from Hannibal's breast pocket out of his shirtsleeve, along with Hannibal's *own* wallet.

"Do you often lift wallets off of marks or persons of interest while making a seduction attempt?"

"It's called multitasking," Will teases.

Hannibal cannot keep the grin off of his face as he removes Will's wallet from his own shirtsleeve, the light from the lamps glinting off of the zipper on the coin pocket. Will laughs again, and Hannibal decides that *alright*.

He likes him.

(*A lot*)

"See you around," Will smirks, nodding his head in a mock bow as a goodbye, and Hannibal nods back as he straightens back up, rolling his neck and nearly dropping the wallet over the railing when the door to the fire escape opens suddenly behind him.

“There you *fucking* are,” Bedelia hisses, leaning against the doorframe. “I’ve been *looking* for you. What are you - “

“Fresh air,” Hannibal bites back, heading towards the door and following her inside. “It’s rather stuffy in there.”

“Then you should fit in fine,” she said dryly, making sure the door closed. “I’m going back to schmooze the archivist, he’s got a Stradivarius in his house with my *name* on it.”

And with that, she walks off, leaving Hannibal with his thoughts and Will’s wallet.

Oh, and Abigail’s voice in his ear.

“So,” she says very calmly. “*Could you please place the camera on the frame if you still want to pull this job?*”

“I need a drink first,” Hannibal remarks, accepting a glass of white wine from a waitress. He would have preferred red, but any alcohol at this point is enough. However, if he wasn’t so composed, he probably would have spit it out like a cheap comedy gag at Abigail’s next remark.

“I’ll bet. So, are you going to jump him later or-”

“Abigail!” Hannibal mutters harshly under his breath, finishing the drink and setting it down on the table, opening the wallet to look inside. No IDs, no catch, just a little card with plain, slightly messy handwriting and a phone number:

We don’t need to keep ‘accidentally’ running into each other. I like seafood. Roses are cute but I’d prefer diamonds.

He can’t fight the smile that spreads across his face again.

Abigail’s saying something. “Could you repeat that, I apologize, I wasn’t listening.”

A sigh. “*Look, it’s really cute that you’ve finally met someone you can be interested in and actually want to be around. All I’m saying is, the next time you stick your tongue down his throat while on a surveillance job, could you please give me a warning?*”

Will opens Hannibal’s wallet to put the ID card in, only to find nothing in the wallet with a little card inside and beautiful script and a phone number:

I know you’re going to end up with this wallet by the end of the night. The number you already have is strictly for business. For all other needs, use this number.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so three chapters in three days, alright! Unfortunately, the next update probably won't be for several more days or up to a week, as I move back to college! I gotta regroup there and then I'll post more soon, promise!

Please, please leave all the comments and kudos you like! I love responding to them!

Come visit me on [Tumblr](#)!

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Abigail plays DJ while Hannibal and Will negotiate.

Chapter Notes

A little short chapter, to break up the length of the next one. Hope y'all enjoy some snark!

I recommend [this song](#) for listening along to during this piece!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“This Wi-Fi is a crime, and that's coming from *me*, who helped you steal a 30-carat diamond with only a guard's ID, a few turned off alarms, and a cup of tea,” Abigail muttered, stabbing at her keyboard with one hand while reaching for a Frito. It was extra delicious with Hannibal trying not to appear disgusted as she chewed. “Get a grip, it's delicious chemicals.”

Hannibal's expression decidedly does not change as he sips his coffee. He's due for a refill, but doesn't want to get up until he's sure Abigail is connected. “Do I not pay you enough to not solely subsist on convenience store food?”

“Yes, you do,” Abigail says with a smile, bits of chips stuck in her teeth to piss him off. “But I like cheap food, so you'll have to deal with it. Unless you're going to make dinner again.”

“Are you connected yet?” Hannibal asks, his foot tapping, slightly impatient. “I am on a schedule.”

Abigail glared over the top of her laptop. “What *schedule*, Phillip is golfing today and none of your identities have anything planned.”

“A meeting.”

“Ohhhh,” Abigail said, tilting her head, feigning interest. She abruptly closed her laptop and gathered up her Fritos and can of cherry Coke. “Well, I'll leave you to it.”

“I need the security footage in the archive room, Abigail,” Hannibal reminds, his fingers curled slightly tighter around his coffee cup. “No messing around.”

She rolled her eyes, popping open her soda can and getting little bits of red liquid on the table. “I’m going to use my ethernet cord, try and get a better connection. Enjoy your meeting. *Strictly business*, right?”

Hannibal holds unamused eye contact as he finishes his coffee. His non-answer is as good as Abigail’s going to get, and she smiles innocently as she takes a seat at the other side of the cafe so she is still facing him, and she plugs into an outlet and proceeds to drown out the rest of the noise of the area.

Hannibal pushes aside his coffee cup and pulls out his phone, responding to emails from his bookseller ID, when a cup of espresso is set down beside his hand. “Don’t know your order, so I went with this.”

A smile appears on Hannibal’s face before he can hide it, and he looks up to see Will slide into the seat across from him, his own cup of coffee fogging up the glasses on his face. There’s another bit to this appearance that catches Hannibal’s attention: a wedding ring.

“Thank you,” Hannibal says, having a sip. Will smiles in return. “Do you often wear glasses?”

“If it fits the cover,” Will says smoothly, setting down his cup so the light glints off of the ring. The diamond in the ring is decently sized.

“That’s at least three carats,” Hannibal notes. “Respectable. Slightly above the standard size for an engagement ring and an entire carat above the standard size for a wedding ring.”

“Simple business psychology,” Will says with a shrug, his eyes glinting and matching the ring. “People with wedding rings are more likely to be trusted in business settings. Gives off the impression that you can be trusted, as at least one person trusts you enough to spend the rest of your life with you.”

“Fake ring?”

“Stone is real, any meaning behind it is fake,” Will says, having another sip of his coffee in between this back-and-forth. It’s black, no cream or sugar or milk. Perhaps the most honest thing Hannibal seen yet. No frivolities, just black coffee and slight stubble.

Abigail peeks over her laptop, and rolls her eyes at the pair before her.

Business.

Right.

Sure, Hannibal.

She easily hacks her way into the café sound system that's piping in soft music, and chooses a different Broadway tune to start playing.

“So,” Will asks, leaning back in his chair, his right arm stretching out to rest against the back of the free chair beside him, “what would you like to discuss, doc?”

“Would it kill you to use my name, Mr. Graham?”

“As soon as you use mine,” Will smirks. “It bothers you, that's why I *have* to do it. Now, what did you want to talk about?”

Hannibal bites down on his annoyance, but he can't deny he enjoys these conversations, enjoys *Will*. “I have a - *proposition*, of sorts.”

“I like to be wined and dined before propositioned,” Will teases, and Hannibal allows himself to smile again. “But do go on.”

“What is it about the Botticelli you want?” Hannibal asks. “The money, or the painting?”

“I don't like stuff, really. It's about the money,” Will says, a hand waving to show his disinterest. “But mostly, it's because I get *bored*.”

Hannibal nods for a moment, then reaches into his breastpocket and removes a folded piece of paper, sliding it across the table to Will. Will raises an eyebrow, and uses his free hand to unfold it. His eyes widen a fraction as he looks back up at Hannibal.

“A Vermeer?” he asks, in a quieter tone than before laughing a little bit at the picture of the painting. “The latest Vermeer sale was worth over 30 million.”

“Unfortunately, this one should only be worth around 16 million dollars,” Hannibal says, in light air around his words to show how he much he doesn't care.

“Where did you get your hands on a Vermeer?”

“Atlanta. I was - bored, at the time,” Hannibal adds as an afterthought, as though he's talking about a hideous velvet painting he found at a thrift store. “You may have it, if you wish. As long as you stay away from *my* painting.”

Will purses his lips slightly, his fingers tracing over the paper. He seems to be genuinely considering the offer. And indeed, he is. It's a tempting offer, it truly is. But...

He straightens up, moving his arm off of the back of the chair and leaning forward. He smiles. “That's a very *attractive* offer, *doctor*. But I will have to regretfully decline.”

“And why is that?”

“Thrill of the game,” he says, grin still present on his face. “And I don't take bribes. What kind of person would that make me?”

Hannibal's hand reaches down under the table and grabs Will's wrist, from where Will's fingers were just starting to reach into his pocket for his wallet. “A valiant effort, if not

futile.”

Will hisses, trying to pry his fingers off, but he’s laughing at the same time. “It’s in my nature, can’t blame me for trying,” he says with a grimace before Hannibal finally lets go, and he shakes out his wrist. “Damn, that’s a hell of a grip.”

“It’s necessary, as apparently there’s a thief insistent on cleaning me out of my leather wallet collection,” Hannibal replies, feigning disdain.

“Fine leather wallets imply you have enough money to spend on where you keep it,” Will answers back. They hold a glare for a few moments before they both break and let out some laughs. It’s lighter, now, between them. The constant need to undermine the other is still there, but more soft jabs than truly trying to turn the other away.

And so, they don’t even realize at first that the conversation turns to very basic topics, like favorite coffee blends, to favorite drinks, to that new Mediterranean place that opened, and a half hour has passed and they haven’t even noticed.

And when they both get up to leave, Hannibal steps deliberately in the part of another customer, so he runs into him. “Excuse me,” he says politely, and as the man turns around Hannibal slips the wallet out of his pocket and pulls out a twenty before leaving the wallet on the table for him to discover later. He hands the bill to Will. “Thank you for the coffee.”

“My pleasure, doctor,” Will teases, still accepting the money. “We went from sixteen million or twenty bucks. The economy’s rough, isn’t it?”

Hannibal lets out a laugh at that.

However, after they’ve said their goodbyes he notices that the music is much louder than it was earlier, and he looks over to see Abigail mock-conducting the music with one hand as she manipulates the mouse with the other as she mouthed along to the words:

And from the way that I feel, when that bell starts to peal,

I could swear I was falling

I could swear I was falling

It’s almost like being in love

When the song ends, a shadow is cast across her laptop, and Abigail looks up into the unamused face of Hannibal Lecter.

“Say what you will,” Abigail says, observing the movements of the workers in the archive through the security footage she hacked into. “I thought I was funny.”

“It’s good that *you* do.”

"Don't know why you keep wasting your time with some fake doctor who wants the same damn painting you do," Matthew sighed, crumbling up a hamburger wrapper and tossing it at the trash can. It missed. "You're not worth his time, and he isn't worth yours. We just have a job to do. And we already have a plan to break in, why are we waiting?"

Will shook his head, leaning against his kitchen counter. "I'm playing a mark, Matthew, it's what I do. He's got extra information that would be useful in avoiding being caught. And I'd really rather not have either of us get caught because I don't really see either of us bailing the other out."

"O ye of little faith," Matthew sassed back. "Please, I'd leave your ass and make off with ten million dollars."

"Exactly why I need this plan to be perfect," Will stressed, fiddling with the sticker on the apple he intended on eating. "So I am working a different angle and player. And so, why don't you go and finish doing surveillance around the exhibit construction, and let me finish working on the easiest way in."

Matthew left soon afterwards, in a janitor outfit and eyes rolling. And it wasn't long afterwards that Will called a new number in his phone.

Hannibal, on the other end of the line, held it in between his ear and his shoulder as he practiced writing out Phillip's signature. "Hello, Mr. Graham."

"Doctor," Will greeted, leaning forward on his counter, examining his apple. "I'm going to need to see you again. Business, you know."

"Of course, I would expect nothing less."

"Annnnd, you can buy lunch."

Chapter End Notes

Please, please leave all the comments and kudos you like! I love responding to them!

Come visit me on [Tumblr](#)!

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

It's all fun and games until someone gets hurt.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

One week until Botticelli exhibit opening

“You’d better be careful, Mr. Hartford,” Bedelia says, grace and charm oozing as she came to a stop outside of Phillip’s office, even allowing him close to her. “Look for signs that Congressman Jeffries may be looking for a new benefactor. You know, missing your calls, ignoring your messages, no more little favors.”

Philip leans against the doorframe of his office, raising an eyebrow in amusement. “You know, Daphne, those are the same signs that your spouse is cheating on you.”

Bedelia smiles crisply. “Isn’t that right? Life is funny like that.” She gathers up her purse and makes her way to the door, smiling with the satisfaction of gaining trust and him still being unaware of the microphone under his desk. “I really do hope that you’ll take up Senator Martin on her offer.”

“Until Jefferies stop making returns, I think our partnership will hold firm,” Philip said, shaking Bedelia’s hand with a smile of his own. “Do give Senator Martin my best.”

“I will,” Bedelia says cordially, nodding her head, and as soon as the door closes behind her, she drops the appearance of being a senator’s PA. Hannibal’s around the corner, finishing sending something on his phone. “He’s cocky. Easy mark, he thinks he’s on top of the world. So, when - *are you listening to me?*”

Hannibal looks up from his screen. “Of course I am, Bedelia. Why wouldn’t I be?”

She barely held back an eyeroll as they walked out of the building, Hannibal still paying more attention to the phone than to her. “When are we breaking in, we can just take it now, just have Abigail take out the alarms and walk right in. It’s hanging on the damn wall, for God’s sake.”

“I’m working on an extra plan in case this job falls through,” Hannibal says smoothly, and Bedelia has to sneer and look away for a moment. “Something the matter?”

Yes, Bedelia thinks. The fact that you're postponing a ten-million dollar heist for the sheer pleasure of playing a cat-and-mouse game with a man nearly as annoying as you and nearly drooling every time he uses French words in a Southern accent.

Yes, she'd seen the two of them chatting when they were supposed to be casing, and no, she wasn't jealous. He could lust over whoever he wanted. However, Will Graham was getting in the way of her share, and she would not stand for that.

Instead of voicing her thoughts, she simply smiled. A fake, plastic smile, completely corporate without a trace of warmth. "No. Nothing."

It has been three weeks since Hannibal and Will met, and they have seen or spoken to each other nearly every day since. It started, obviously, being in similar circles and locations, and constantly teasing each other. Hannibal has taken to using the less expensive wallets and the more expensive calligraphy paper for notes. And he cannot deny that he has not saved each and every messy note found in the cheap, faux leather wallets he removes from Will's person on a regular basis. He has never before been fond of being predictable.

He is not sure, however, how much of this... *relationship* (it doesn't feel like the right word, but for once, he can't find a better one that fits) is attempting to play a mark, and how much of it is personal amusement.

(It's leaning more towards amusement.)

Will occasionally calling or texting one of his several numbers, learning about each one and being relentlessly annoying the entire time.

Do you ever have trouble remembering your real name? he teases once.

Never, Hannibal had replied, undoing his napkin as they sit down to dinner at some restaurant Will recommended. It's nowhere near his standards, but there's that hint of a genuine smile on Will's face and that makes up for everything, honestly.

Will manages to slip off Hannibal's Rolex one day. The next day his fake wedding ring is missing from his finger, and once again, Hannibal's hand catches his wrist as he reaches into his pocket to get the ring back.

"Why do you continue to do this?" Hannibal asks when he finally lets go of Will's hand. Will grins, even as he rubs his wrist to soothe the pain.

"Maybe I'm just trying to get you to touch me," he answers back. And that, as far as both of them are concerned, is that.

(It isn't, Hannibal 'accidentally' brushes against Will's shoulder and Will's pickpocketing skills are quite sloppy around him so Hannibal almost always feels him reach for something.)

You could just ask.

I don't take charity, I take what I want, Will says, his feet up on the empty side of the booth where Hannibal is sitting. Hannibal doesn't even attempt to push him off, it's fruitless.)

The first time Will runs into Abigail, it's completely by coincidence, as she was finishing a meeting with Hannibal. He calls her Janet, she calls him Mr. Beaumont, and heavily implies that she will, quote-on-quote, "*Gone Girl* herself and Hannibal if he tries to go to the police."

"She's charming."

"And the best there is."

"And you're only ever truly interested in the best," Will says knowingly. He is correct.

Will is correct about too many things.

Will likes to fish, but doesn't have a chance to do it as often in the city. He prefers soft, warm fabrics over the stretch of fresh-pressed suits. Prefers whiskey over wine, isn't opposed to scotch or bourbon. ~~Perfect blue eyes.~~ Fidgets, but not when pulling a scheme. He fidgets a bit more around him now. Odd, as they are more comfortable around each other now.

But all it's all part of the game, of course.

Will pairs rye whiskey with Reese's peanut butter cups, a crime worse than grand theft in Hannibal's eyes. But perhaps the sin is lessened by the chocolate smeared always left on the corner of Will's lip.

This is all a ruse to keep him distracted from the painting.

There's a scar barely under Will's collarbone. He had noticed it when Will adjusted his shirt after sitting down, and he couldn't focus for an entire minute, consumed with asking a hundred questions about where he received it. He never asks. It doesn't seem like the right time.

Nothing more than playing another mark, another means to an end.

Will may have a penchant for diamonds and mild disdain for flowers, but the rose left in his shoulder bag gets Hannibal the slightest hint of a blush before the sly, charming mask slides back on.

If he can keep him off-balance, this will be an easy heist to pull off. It's taken weeks of planning. Then he probably will lost touch after time as Will moves on to other paintings, other jewels, other *cities*.

There are creases by Will's eyes when he laughs, as though he doesn't often laugh. At least, not when it's an authentic.

Hannibal Lecter is vague, and all of identities share similar traits. Someone of high status, not too high to arouse suspicion, merely to foster interest in an unsuspecting mark. It caught

Will's interest. Truly interesting.

Will has always had the gift of empathy. He knows, if he had a conscience, it would probably have led him on a path to do something good, but he doesn't have one, so he doesn't do it for good. He uses it to play to his advantage, figuring out what each mark wants out of whatever relationship this version of himself offers. It's what has gotten him through life, people 'donating' or else making it easy to for him to help himself to money, jewels, some artwork.

Hannibal Lecter, however, is difficult to read.

He doesn't fall for any sort of ruse, and his wrist is starting to bruise from all the times he's tried to pick his pocket while fluttering his eyes. He doesn't seem to buy anything Will is selling, preferring, much like Will, to steal it.

So, he makes it his goal to just keep Hannibal interested, in him, not the painting.

Hannibal's very adept at stealing, taking a ring off of his finger so quickly Will barely felt it. He feels him stealing a thing or two on separate occasions, his fingers brushing gently over his shoulders and inside his pockets.

He makes fun of Hannibal because it's easy, and they never stick, just little jabs at his ridiculous taste in food and wine, but he can't deny that he has fine taste in jewelry, in art, and in fostering in him a new appreciation for red wine. But it's just part of this game: feign you're giving a little, get a little in return.

Hannibal's cheekbones are sharp enough to slice through a diamond - no, that wasn't what he meant to think, he meant to think that -

It seems like the past three-to-four weeks have built up to dinner at Hannibal's house, which is large. Will isn't really surprised, and it's a step from his own luxury loft, and he considers where all the valuables are kept. It's a reflex more than anything. Perhaps he'll do a quick scan of the palace later, after all, if the man is willing to just give away a Vermeer, he's got to have more than that lying around.

After dinner, of course. Which is, honestly, delicious. And he's been to several fancy restaurants since this little game began, but it's a pomegranate-glazed salmon with lobster risotto and it's the best meal Will has shared with anyone in a long time. Classy, but simple undertones. Much like the man sitting opposite him, who makes layered jokes and short, abrupt puns that startle a laugh out of Will. It's comfortable, *easy*.

And it stays easy as Hannibal offers an after-dinner drink, a scotch on the rocks, and he jokingly asks if he has any Snickers bars. Hannibal raises an eyebrow as he has a sip of brandy. "Have you made it a goal of yours to pair every candy with a liquor?"

"It will be my legacy, doctor," Will smirks into his glass. "Seeing as I intend to never be caught for theft."

Conversation turns to other topics, then lulls a little as the drinks are topped off, and eventually all words subside for the present, as the glasses are set down and their arms wrap around each other, words melting into long, slow kisses. It's measured, precise, reading into what the other wants and needs from this.

Hasn't it all built to this? they both think. Isn't this the payoff of the game?

"What do you like?" Will asks, a trace of that smooth tone still in his voice as his fingers move along Hannibal's tie, loosening it and undoing the buttons on the collar and just the top button of his shirt. "Submissive? Dominant? Loud? *Restrained?*" He pauses while he lets Hannibal's nose under his chin. "What do you want?" he murmurs, that gorgeous purr rolling off of his tongue, so close. Hannibal kisses up Will's jaw line, slowly, deliberately, and pauses when he reaches the shell of his ear.

"You," he finally breathed out, words falling out of his mouth before he can think, letting his fingers rest on Will's hip. He forces down his disappointment when Will straightens up, discomfort flooding his features in a way Hannibal has never seen. Will doesn't pull away, though, not yet, he thinks bitterly, but then there's a nervous laugh from Will that feels genuine.

"That's, uh," he swallows, smiling faintly, "That's a tall order, doc. I - I barely remember that ruse. It's been a while."

"No," Hannibal says lowly, his hand moving from Will's hip to the small of his back. "Not a ruse." He isn't sure where these words are coming from, but Will responds, moving along and wrapping his arms around Hannibal's neck, his fingers tangling in the hair at the base of his neck.

God, it's so easy. Fitting together like this, just enjoying this with no ulterior motive. They don't even have to think. It's surreal, having someone look right through you, past all of your bullshit and peeling off all of your masks, ripping through the costumes to find your true self underneath-

Oh shit suddenly flashes through both of their minds, and Will physically freezes first as actual *panic* races through his veins.

He breaks character for the first time in almost four solid weeks.

Will pulls away, but not far enough that he's still only inches away from Hannibal's face, and he turns away, "I - I can't do this," he says quickly, blinking and swallowing as he tries to regain any sense of (not) himself. Some identity whose heart isn't in their fucking throat.

"Neither can I," Hannibal responds, just as quickly, as he attempts to regain his composure and ignore an uncomfortably familiar feeling in his chest.

When Hannibal was just starting in his line of work and before he came into his (ill) legally acquired wealth (*memories and histories that are buried very, very deep and even Abigail knows to not go digging around for those*) and practically starving, he was caught by a man right as he was stealing his wallet. He'd broken the man's wrist and twisted his own in the

escape without a second thought, just to make away with the prize, desperate. Up until now, he's never wanted anything else even close to that badly. Jobs fall through, marks catch on, life happens. There's never been anything besides that wallet that he's been desperate enough to wound himself.

That is, of course, until now.

It hurts, it hurts so much to just let this slip through his fingers, but. Hannibal lets go of Will, However, he doesn't move away. He'll have to be shoved away, but he's not going to force anything. They can - they can go back to what they were before, whatever it was. That's enough, that's more than-

"I - I'm gonna go, now," Will says, quiet, more quiet and reserved than Hannibal's ever seen him. Hannibal feels himself nod, and Will leaves the room, taking his jacket with him and he leaves.

The usually sweet brandy is bitter as Hannibal finishes his glass.

"Are you okay?" Abigail finally blurts out, sitting across Hannibal in her favorite armchair as Hannibal sits in his, his chin in hand, obviously more fascinated with the ornate carvings in the fireplace than Abigail's report on her new faux identity as an archivist intern at the gallery. He'd sent her a text less than forty minutes ago demanding to have her over and hear the report, but he is...*distracted*. "Look, I know it's not *polite*, or whatever, but you have not said one single word in thirty-seven minutes, not even to critique this snack-size bag of Funyuns. Are you...*okay*?"

Hannibal doesn't respond verbally, just slightly adjusts his posture and he sits a little straighter, recrossing his legs on the other side of the chair. Abigail swears the phrase "*I'm fine*" is radiating through his pores, and he is obviously *not* fine. She stands up. "Give me twenty minutes."

No response. She resists rolling her eyes as she leaves on an errand. She has a guess what's wrong with him. He's been in a much better mood in the last four weeks than the three years she's known him.

She has seen him pissed off, and it had ended with them leaving that city in the middle of the night, bloodstained shirt hidden under his jacket. He isn't at that point, however. He's - well, it's *raw*, whatever he's feeling, little cracks in his person suit showing through, which she knows is a rarity, and something he hates more than anything.

She gets back twenty minutes later (Hannibal has *still* not moved) and sets down a pint of sea salt-caramel ice cream and a spoon on a plate so the condensation doesn't seep into the cherry wood of the table beside the chair. Well, that, and a bottle of ten-year Tawney with a glass. "They're apparently supposed to pair well together, and for *ten fucking dollars* for a pint of ice cream, it should. And I thought that working through the whole thing with a glass would soothe your ego."

He offers absolutely nothing. She sighed.

“Us plebeians work through our emotions like this, you could always give it a try.”

Hannibal, finally, nods. Just a fraction, but it’s something.

“I’m going back to my place, text me if you need an update. Six days until the heist, remember?”

Hannibal does not respond to her this time. Abigail ends up leaving quietly, deciding that it’s better for him to work through this by himself, as obviously, nothing gets through his bullshit except Will *fucking* Graham.

The ice cream melts, but the Tawney is half empty within an hour.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the angsty note in my fluff fic, but it is Hannigram, so they can't ever TALK about their feelings, noooooo. But there is more on the way, so stay tuned!

Please, please leave all the comments and kudos you like! I love responding to them!

Come visit me on [Tumblr](#)!

Chapter 6

Will ignores Matthew's calls and texts, asking if he wanted to coordinate about the plot. Eventually, he just sends a text that tells him firmly that he needs to be left alone with his thoughts right now. *Yes*, he understands that hasn't worked out great for him in the past. But right now, he just throws the keys to his penthouse onto the table, head straight to his bedroom with a bottle of bourbon, and collapses on the bed.

Fuck. This.

This is *never* supposed to happen.

Cardinal rule of con artistry: never, ever, ever, *ever*; start to believe your own lies. You only need to sell them. You don't *ever* let yourself believe them.

Drink your own snake oil, and you'll end up poisoning yourself.

Why'd I leave? Will thinks, an arm across his face in defeat, sheets a fucking mess, not even bothering to change out of his clothes. *Fuck, I could have just stayed and -*

Nope, his mind immediately corrects. *There we go, that was the problem right there.*

He wanted to stay.

Not in a quick roll-in-sheets-leave-in-the-morning kind of way, in an I-want-to-stay-here-with-you kind of way.

"What did you think this was?" he scoffs out loud to his reflection in the mirror on the outside of the wardrobe. "This - *thing*. You - you don't care, you were lying. You were *lying* because all you care about is your five million dollars cut in stolen Botticelli, and he was standing in the fucking way. You don't care about - *fuck*," he cut himself off, dropping his head so he hit it on the side of the bed. He thought about the seven different expensive leather wallets with seven different IDs belonging to the same man stuffed into his bedside table drawer.

"You aren't supposed to care," he said in a near whine to his reflection. "This was - this was just a game, another con. And you fucked it up. Both ways, now."

He remembers that Hannibal pulled away at the same time he pulled away, and had said that *he* couldn't do this either.

Did that make it better or worse?

God, he could have had the painting *weeks* ago, Matthew was secure in the janitor position, he could sneak him in, they'd be in the exhibit and out within minutes, and then pass off the painting to a buyer and leave town with five million dollars in his pocket.

He'd dragged it out to keep this game going. Had he seriously been wasting his time?

Will decided that he didn't want to think about this anymore, he was going to drink this entire bottle and drown out the noise in his head.

When he woke up at noon the next day, the pounding headache was somehow made even worse when his brain immediately nagged you wouldn't have this headache if you were still at-

"Shut up," Will grained to no one in particular, covering his face with a pillow and considering smothering himself to block everything out. He groaned again when his phone buzzed, and he had to fumble on the bedside table for his, squinting to read the text.

Hey man we have five days before the opening are we going tonight or not

No, Will texted back, dropping his phone onto the rug and covering himself up in his sheets again. Fucking sunlight.

It takes two hours before he can drag himself out of bed and shower and dress, before then collapsing on his couch and mindlessly flipping through channels on TV.

He's bored.

He's so fucking bored because he could be drinking a mimosa with a hickey on his neck in a sunny kitchen without a hangover but no, he's watching fucking HGTV and fighting the urge to throw up.

Instead, he stares at his reflection just visible in the glare of the TV and sighs.

He knows damn well why he left, even if he won't admit it to anyone. It is absolutely terrifying to have someone look right through you and all of your ruses and pretty words that distract everyone else, and just cut right to your core.

Hannibal had asked for no ruse, and Will had really been about to give him that.

That house was covered in expensive antiques and artwork and probably a safe with the liquid assets inside. It'd conceivably be easy to break into, there were no alarms on the front door. He could pick it, walk inside, take whatever he wanted.

That's a good idea. He'll do just that. Adrenaline should push the rest of the hangover out of his system. He also ignores that little voice in his head that mocks the amount of time he's putting into his appearance.

Dark jeans and a black shirt, standard break-in clothes, what's the big deal?

Really don't want to give off a look that screams 'I thought about you all fucking night while I was drunk off my ass'

You're a thief. You're not supposed to be seen.

It shouldn't have been so simple to unlock the door, simple bolt lock, two second job. It's dark inside, and only the dying remains of the seven o'clock sunlight illuminate the room, as no lights are on in the house. He's careful to not make any noise, stepping only on carpet as he makes for the staircase.

"I would have answered the doorbell."

"Jesus fucking Christ," Will swears, turning to the sound of Hannibal's voice. The man in question is quietly sipping from a cup of coffee, standing barely in sight by the refrigerator. "Trying to give me a heart attack?"

"Forgive me for inquiring the intruder who has broken into my home."

"Vampire lore, doctor," Will fires back, falling back into a sense of teasing. "Once one's invited in, they come and go as they please."

"Perhaps I ought to have known that before inviting to you to dinner, Mr. Graham."

And there they are, they're back to where they were as though nothing had occurred the night before. They - they could stay like that, right? Back and forth, poke and prod. Simple.

But then there's a smile breaking across both of their faces for a brief moment before they both hurriedly put their masks back on, and no, they can't go back to before. There's something just too complicated between them for that.

"If you're still interested," Hannibal says over the rim of his cup, and Will's heart seizes up for a moment, "The Vermeer is in the study upstairs."

"I don't want the damn *Vermeer*," comes flying out of Will's mouth before he can stop himself. "I'm not interested in it."

"Then why are you here?"

Will thinks for a moment, and then moves over to stand across the kitchen island so there's a barrier between himself and Hannibal. "I - I don't know," he admits.

"If this is about-

"No, it's not about last night. Well, not exactly, you know what?" Will says, setting his jaw. "I'm not an honest person."

"That in and of itself is a paradoxical statement, as that may be the most honest thing I've ever heard you say."

"Let me finish," Will says. "I'm not an honest fucking person, and neither are you. But - but you're honest around me, and I'm honest around you." *Fuck, it's all clicking together now*, he

thinks, wanting to laugh but it's not coming out. "We've - we've been telling the truth to each other since day one, doc. I haven't bothered with a facade and neither have you. We see right through each other, which is terrifying for so many fucking reasons because I can't lie to you. I stopped - *we* stopped last night because it wasn't a game anymore at that point."

Hannibal finally set down the coffee cup, nodding at Will's words. "And so, what is your next move in this game?"

"I just told you," Will says, coming around the island to now stand in front of Hannibal. "That this stopped being a game. There is no decided winner in this."

"Then what is it that you propose?"

"We may have been honest this whole time, but we haven't been *direct*, so to speak," Will says, his hand daring to reach out and lightly pull on Hannibal's loose, undone collar. "That's changing right now."

And then he roughly drags him down into a kiss.

Thoughts of the night before flash through Hannibal's mind, and while he has no intention to pull away from Will, a part of him still thinks Will is going to run away from him, from this, yet again.

But Hannibal is brought back to the present by Will bumping his forehead lightly against his, kissing gently at and around his lips once, twice, making sweet, soft sounds and words.

"Please, please."

A pause before breathing against his lips, *"Hannibal. Please. P-"*

That's what does it, and Will would laugh as Hannibal immediately changes their positions, so that Will is now pressed up against the cold metal of the fridge, but now Hannibal's actually returning the kiss, his fingers reaching up to undo the top few buttons on Will's shirt and *okay*.

Maybe Will had wanted to get caught tonight.

"Was - " Will has to take a deep breath as Hannibal kisses just under his ear, before he goes back to a slight tease, " - was actually using your name all that I needed to do?"

He can feel Hannibal smile briefly against his neck, ducking his head down quickly to kiss that the scar just underneath Will's collarbone, and revels at the soft whine he receives in return.

"Of course not, *Will*," he answers back, teasing a little himself. "It's merely a bonus."

Will finally does laugh this time, and so does Hannibal as they wrap their arms around each other and Hannibal lifts Will up, supporting him as Will's legs slip over his hips.

"So about last night," Will says in between kisses. "Any chance we can finish that?"

The long, slow kiss he receives is a perfect answer.

There's a knock on Matthew's door, and he nearly trips on the ottoman as he makes his way there. When he opens it, there's a blonde woman in a perfectly pressed navy pantsuit standing before him. Her smile is as genuine as the local news anchor wishing you a good morning at three AM. "Mr. Brown?"

"Maybe," Matthew answers in return, leaning on the doorframe. "Who wants to know?"

"Bedelia Du Maurier," the woman responds, offering no handshake. "May I come in, I've got a business offer for you."

Matthew shrugs, letting her in. She sits on the side of the couch, ankles crossed. "I understand you're interested in the Botticelli at the gallery."

"How do you-"

"Unfortunately, *your* partner seems to be more interested in *my* partner than the painting, correct?"

"...Yeah," Matthew agrees, hesitantly. "What are you offering me?"

"In precisely five days, the exhibit will open and neither of our partners has pitched a plan to break in. I, for one, am not about to be out millions of dollars. 50/50 split, the two of us, sound fair?"

"Sure thing," Matthew says, grinning, sitting opposite her in a chair. "So what's your plan?"

Bedelia smirks, pulling out a little electronic bug that looks highly advanced. "You're going to inform the director that he's being *watched*."

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Did you know Wikipedia has a whole category dedicated to con schemes? Very useful. Anyway, enjoy this short little chapter as I plan an art heist.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Usually, Hannibal Lecter didn't annoy Abigail.

They were built on testing, going back and forth. She preferred to crack wise while his humor was drier than the Sahara, with the occasional sprinkling of terrible puns. He'd given up on trying to steer her away from her love of junk food, giving in for the most part. But on occasion, she'd find leftovers in the fridge for her.

The only time she could truly remember being annoyed with Hannibal was the one time she was in the police station in San Diego after the arrest (honestly, the fight had been warranted but the stabbing had been an accident, and he was *fine*, who needs an appendix, anyway) and Hannibal had just strolled in and smoothly lied that *his daughter* had no involvement in the incident as he paid her bail. Driving back to the hotel, she had narrowed her eyes.

"Really? *That's* the alibi? I'm your daughter going through a rebellious phase?"

"I paid your sparring partner's medical bills with a little extra to compensate for emotional toil. And next time, go for the carotid."

He paid for all of her student loans after a few large-scale jobs, and in turn she created persona after persona for him, filled with minute details down to food allergies and childhood fears. He listened to her with apparent authentic interest drone on and on about her work, and she put up with opera music drowning out her rock station. They're truly opposites, but they work well together.

"Why did you decide to keep me on?" Abigail asked a year into their initial partnership, swinging the diamond pendant from its chain, and Hannibal hadn't told her to put it back in the box yet. She didn't feel hypnotized, and it wasn't working on Hannibal either. He looked up over his tablet, and just smiled.

"What you do is its own set of skills, style, and excellence," he replies. "A skill I do not possess, and I admire greatly. I cannot perform an aria, but I appreciate and support the actress that can."

"*That*," Abigail agrees, swinging the diamond back and forth in front of Hannibal, like a cat toy. "And I control your offshore accounts."

“Perhaps a bit of that, as well.”

As she mentioned, rarely was Abigail truly annoyed by Hannibal. She could deal with the snide comments on Fritos, and fleeing in the middle of the night on a plane or a car, and the fact that he was an all-around snob, and the fact that she had to put up with Bedelia’s even snider comments. All of that, she could deal with.

However, currently, there is a goddamn problem to deal with, and he will.

NOT.

ANSWER.

THE.

PHONE.

Not a single line or email address has gotten a response.

Fuck.

Abigail is already drinking her Red Bull when she gets to the gas station cashier, gives him a ten, and tells him to keep the change. She checks her phone, still no answer. Hurriedly, she finishes the can, crunches it in her hand, and chucks it into a nearby trash can. She gets into the driver’s seat of her Chevy and groaned as she checked her messages. No response.

However, now there was something different than just the unanswered messages.

-read at 10:37 AM-

“Are you fucking kidding me?” she swore, rolling her eyes and letting her head fall back against the seat. “I hate him. I really do. Not fucking bothering to answer me - ” she fumbled with her phone enough to send a text.

I know you’re awake or alive or something now, you’d better answer me back. Be warned: my grammar will get worse and I WILL keep texting until you answer me.

No response yet, just those three dots indicating a response in the works. Until finally:

Just a moment.

I texted you at ten last night, I’m all out of moments, Abigail texted, then leaving her phone in the cup holder as she started to drive. It dinged as she was driving, and she checked at the stoplight.

Biting to the quick today, it would seem. And what is the nature of your urgency?

Sometimes he honestly should just come out and say “what is your fucking problem,” Abigail thought. It would save time. She had just enough time to send two words before the light turned green again.

Goldberg Variations.

Their code word for “*shit has hit the fucking fan.*”

That hopefully got his fucking attention.

When Abigail arrived she was surprised that the front door was not locked, and even more surprised that there was dirty china in the sink and the espresso machine still on. There was the low hum of the record player in the library upstairs, and she made sure that her heels were clacking not in tune with the percussion in the piece, and she was talking the entire way.

“You had better have a *damn good* reason for not answering me, when we have a fucking problem to fucking deal with. I have a lot of questions, you hear me? Why is Bedelia pissed enough to inform me that she’s out of plan now? Why is Will Graham’s partner in contact with her? Why would he tip off the director? Why is the goddamn painting being sent back into the archives? *Why aren’t you fucking answering me?* And, wh-”

She cut herself off as she shoved the door open and found herself interrupting some philosophical discussion between Hannibal and Will. Will’s feet are actually up on the couch and Hannibal sitting primly on the other side, amusement shining in his eyes.

They’d both obviously been here a while, Hannibal’s collar is loose and only in one layer of clothing and Will’s hair is a damn mess.

Goddammit.

They both turned their attention to the door, and Will honestly looked surprised to see Abigail there. Abigail took a deep breath, blinking a few times.

“Well. This just answered...well, *all* of my fucking questions, bar one.”

“What, then?” Hannibal asks, too calm. God, he’s always extra calm when she starts panicking, and somehow it never settles her nerves. So she made her way over to the armchair and dropped onto it, fixing both of them with a glare.

“We are-” *-don’t say ‘as fucked as both of you, apparently’ this is serious, Abigail-* “Really backed into a corner now. All of us.”

Now they’re both staring at her in interest. Fuck, now there’s two of them, really made for each other. Cute. She’d make a joke about it if she wasn’t freaking out. Instead, she took a deep breath, gathered herself, and started with what she had discovered now.

“Last night, I found out that the Botticelli curator, you know, Phillip, discovered my bug that you planted in his office. This information came from some janitor who will remain

nameless. Is Bedelia going to -”

“She will not go to the police to report us,” Hannibal sighs. “Her identities are tied up with ours, she’d be wrapping the anchor around her own neck as we go down. Now, please continue with the issue at hand.”

Abigail shot him a quicklook, taking another deep breath. “My bug is broken, now, so I have no eyes or ears into the main operation. Also, the gallery, what we’ve been casing for over a month now, does not have that damn painting in it. They put it back into the archives.”

“No disaster,” Hannibal replies smoothly. “Isn’t that why ‘Katelynn Myers’ has an internship in the archives?”

“Hannibal,” she said, very slowly. “I cannot just put a painting in my laptop bag and walk out of there.”

“Of course not.”

“And I can’t sneak you in there, because I’m only allowed in during business hours and I can’t just ‘lose’ my ID card or print off a new one for you, security would see right through that and besides, they already know you in the gallery. Again, we are in a corner. We cannot plan a heist in a new environment in less than 72 hours.”

“There’s always another way in,” Will says, breaking his silence to speak over the rim of his coffee mug. Abigail narrows her eyes for a moment.

She doesn't want to trust Will, not yet. Then again, it took her three jobs and six months to trust Hannibal. And Hannibal, to her knowledge, hasn't trusted anyone besides her since - well, she doesn't ask since when.

There’s a small, real smile on Hannibal’s lips. “And what do you propose, Will?”

Will has another sip as he thinks. “When there’s a delivery or shipment,” he finally asks, “where does that happen?”

“Next door down from the archives for easy ins and outs,” Abigail said. “But tough luck, Graham, their shipping service canceled on picking up a Degas painting the day before the Botticelli opening.”

“Not necessarily,” Will said, tilting his head a little. “I’ll need a phone, to start with.”

Abigail laughed a little, her hand slipping from the armrest to hit against her thigh. “Master plan?”

“It’s a start.”

“Only one problem,” she sighed. “If we could sneak the Botticelli out, they’ll notice the next morning. We won’t have time for an exit strategy.”

This time Hannibal speaks back up. “Not necessarily,” he says, and Abigail is slightly amazed at how they play off each other. “It’s a matter of putting the blame on someone else long enough for us to pull it off.”

“Phillip is laser-focused on this damn painting, Hannibal,” Abigail reminded. “It’s going to take a *lot* to distract him from it.”

Hannibal smirked, tracing a circle on the side of the couch. “You’re forgetting, Abigail: he thinks he’s outsmarted potential thieves, by taking out what he perceives to be the issue. He’s cocky, he thinks he’s avoided being conned. It’s even simpler now to get him where we want him.”

“So what do you want to distract him with?”

“*Well...I do* have a Vermeer worth over sixteen million dollars that I’ve been looking to do something with.”

Will laughs a little, moving closer to Hannibal. “Sixteen million dollars is enough to distract me.” Hannibal returns the small laugh, looking back at Will.

“I’ll need a cardboard box with exact dimensions, and you’ll need to play the head of delivery service on the phone. Let Phillip know that you’ve suddenly had another opening. You’d be *happy* to send a driver out for the Degas.”

“And what do I get out of this?” Will grins, teasing, resting his head on his palm.

“Perhaps retribution, or money. Whichever you prefer.”

Abigail has to interrupt. It’s very cute that they’re together, fine, she will admit that. But there’s ten million dollars on the line. That’s her concern right now. So she snaps her fingers to bring them back to acknowledge her presence. “What - what are you two planning? I’m still involved, right?”

Both men grin at her, and Hannibal speaks first. “Of course, Abigail. And this will be a very simple con, on a larger scale. I trust you’re familiar with three-card monte, correct?”

Abigail breaks out into a grin of her own. “Yeah. Yeah, okay.”

Okay, then.

Game on.

Chapter End Notes

(You can always google 'three card monte' if you're not familiar with the scheme, or wait and be totally surprised!)

Please, please leave all the comments and kudos you like! I love responding to them!

Come visit me on [Tumblr](#)!

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

The best laid plans so often do go awry.

Chapter Notes

Very short chapter, but I had such writer's block, people. This is a little tease for the good stuff in the next chapter, as I needed a way to tie these ends together. I hope you enjoy!

(Yes, I was inspired by Leverage.)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Bedelia tilted her head and nodded as she made eye contact with Phillip, although she had tuned out anything he was actually saying. Then she turned her eyes downward so that she could focus her attention on cutting through her steak, which was too red when she had asked for medium well. She tolerated the blood running into her Parmesan-crusted asparagus and this asshole rambling about benefits on giving up coffee and dealing with the aftereffects of his caffeine addiction because she was waiting for a specific text.

Thankfully, she felt the vibration from her phone go off in the pocket of her pantsuit. Excusing herself with a perfect smile that had all the appearance of sincerity, she checked the message in the bathroom.

It was a picture of a box, the right dimensions of Botticelli's portrayal of Judith holding the head of Holofernes, as it appeared to be secured and padded in the trunk of a car.

Got it. No sign of either of them. My place.

She smiled to herself, put the phone back into her pocket and returned to the table to finish off the meal. She declined an offer of dessert, claiming that she wanted to go home and rest for the unveiling of the painting tomorrow, and that she'd give Senator Martin his best.

How long before he realizes that she's never been within 100 feet of the Capital building, let alone the senator, she wondered. She pushed that thought to the back of her mind, and drove to Matthew's place, knocking on his door. He smiled as he opened the door and let her in.

“Hey, thanks for the key to the archives, saved me time picking the lock. Bit weird if the janitor’s picking lock, huh?”

“Not a problem,” she replied smoothly, going straight to the box and running her fingers over it. “So there wasn’t-”

“No sign of my partner or yours,” Matthew reassured, coming over to the other side of her with a box cutter. “But I did go in pretty early, before they switched over to the night guards. Piece of cake, hid the box in the cleaning cart, essay.”

Bedelia smiled and nodded for Matthew to cut into the box, which he did, cutting the top to cleanly allow for the painting to be slid out. She reached in, after slipping on rubber gloves, and slid the painting out and turned it over.

The smile slid right off of both of their faces when they saw what they had.

“A *Degas*?!” she gritted through her teeth, almost a screech but not quite. “Fucking *ballerinas*, what the fuck, I didn’t want fucking *ballerinas*. Shit. You got the wrong fucking-”

“Hey, don’t pin this on me,” Matthew snapped, folding his arms. “Does that box not have the name? It wasn’t like I could just fuckin’ open it *in* the archives, I’d get caught!”

Bedelia just rolled her eyes, leaving the painting on the table as she swore more under her breath about everything from him to the gross white wine she’d been forced to consume out of politeness to keep her cover.

She told Matthew that she would show up to the opening of the Botticelli to see if there was anything fishier about this, and was shocked that *there*, sitting on the table in front of all of the investors and art critics, a box, with *Botticelli* printed on the front.

Had they seriously fallen for a fucking decoy? Was the museum playing them and actually known what was going on the whole time?

Bedelia overheard Phillip boast about the plan to keep the painting in his office so that it would be extra safe, and cursed her whole situation under her breath.

The room went silent as he took the box cutter and cut through the top. Then he slid on his gloves, reached into the box, and smiled broadly as he pulled the painting out cleanly for the waiting cameras of the press.

And there were audible gasps all around. Not out of awe for the Botticelli, but rather, for what was actually being displayed.

Bedelia would know that goddamn fucking Vermeer anywhere.

Phillip suddenly grew flustered, setting the painting down and apologizing, when one of the investors came to his side, looking a mixture of stunned and stern.

“That's *my* Vermeer!”

“No, it isn't,” Phillip snapped. “This painting was donated to the museum by-”

“What donation?” Sarah, Phillip's secretary, asked in confusion from beside him. “You purchased it from Dr. Cartier for-”

“I never *bought*- ”

“You signed the papers, sir,” she claimed, opening her briefcase and showing them to him. “The bank statement is there as well.”

The curator of the museum suddenly came to Sarah's side, and he snatched the papers before Philip could take them, and he started to flip through them.

“That's quite a lot of money, and you used both the museum and your personal account. Oh, and it says here that the insurance you took out on the painting will pay double in the event of theft,” he said softly. “What a coincidence.”

Phillip's jaw dropped, and he rolled his eyes, making a disbelieving noise. “Do - do you really think I'd steal that painting? I just had a Vermeer donated, don't you think I deserve a little gratitude, sir?”

“Doubtful,” the investor from before spoke up, glaring. “As that Vermeer was stolen from *my* museum in Atlanta over *eight years ago*. ”

Phillip closed his mouth, blinking over and over, and starting to protest as security moved to take him into custody.

Bedelia slipped out of the room, seeing nothing but red as she pulled out her phone, finding Hannibal's number, and pressed 'call.'

I'm sorry, the number you're trying to reach has been disconnected.

“Motherfucker,” she swore, her lips curled in a snarl.

How the fuck did they pull this off?

Chapter End Notes

How did they pull it off? Find out next time in a super long chapter full of aviator sunglasses, forged signatures, and working in between heartbeats and the tick of a clock.

Please, please leave all the comments and kudos you like! I love responding to them!

Come visit me on [Tumblr](#)!

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Three card monte, large-scale.

Chapter Notes

Three card monte is the old card game on street corners, where the mark tries to guess which facedown card is the money card. In a successful con, however, the mark gets none of the payoffs; it all goes to the dealer and his skills.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Abigail checked her makeup in the bathroom mirror, and adjusted her cat-eye glasses. ‘Katelynn Myers’ couldn’t wear contacts, they irritated her eyes too much.

If you’re playing a part, you have to go all the way. You have to sell your character, but not over the top. Sometimes it’s necessary, but for a really good act, you have to be memorable, but not so much that a ponytail and the glasses would work as a disguise.

She headed back to the archive room, her mask firmly tied on.

Two days prior

“Well, personally, if *any* artist could personify the Romanticism period, it would *have* to be Caravaggio’s,” Abigail said, smiling in a way that was blatantly fake.

“Baroque.”

The fake smile grew faker. “What?”

“Caravaggio is a *Baroque*-era artist,” Hannibal said without turning around, his attention focused to his work at the desk. Abigail rolled her eyes and fell back on the couch.

“Holy shit, I will never get this straight.”

“Remember, you are acting as a student, a few mistakes will be excusable,” Hannibal reminds, neatly stacking the papers on the side. “Now, do you -”

“I double-checked the security cameras, there are three in the archives, there’s only one right by the loading entrance. But I can’t switch off the outside one and then the ones in the archives or they’ll suspect something.”

Will spoke a ‘one moment’ into the phone with a smile, then dropping it as he pressed it to his chest along with the mute button. “What time worked best for the -”

“As close to five as possible, that’s when the museum starts to officially close and security is focused on escorting everyone out, and the night watchmen aren’t at their posts yet,” Hannibal says over his shoulder. Will nods, picking the phone back up.

“Why, yes, we’ll be here before five, of course. Y’all have a nice day now, alright? You got it, bye, darlin’,” he says to the receptionist on the other line, then hanging up and craning his neck to the side, stretching. “Alright, delivery time is all set. You were saying there was a camera at the loading entrance.”

“Yeah. But I’ve checked, if it’s a standard size delivery truck, it should block the camera. You’ll be in and out fast enough that the guards won’t get nervous.”

“And they won’t,” Will reminds. “I have a legitimate reason to be there, after all, I’ve just cleared it. How are you going to -”

“Dr. Roehr will leave the room because I’ll ring his phone from another line,” Abigail fires back, uncapping a pen and tapping it against the arm of the couch. “Oh my god, if this works-”

“It will work,” Hannibal reassures, carefully copying out Phillip’s signature on a phony insurance form. “It is simply three card monte on a much larger scale.”

“Easiest scam you can pull. Here, I’ll show it to you.” Will says, pulling out a pack of card from his bag, shuffling them between his hands before taking three away from the rest. He showed Abigail the queen of spades. “Okay. Pick this card after I shuffle, I’ll owe you five bucks.”

Abigail shrugged, looking amused and watched him shuffle the three cards as quickly as possible, only to set them down when Hannibal asked him a question. As soon as Will turned to give Hannibal his full attention, Abigail pinched a tiny corner of the queen card, and when Will turned back, he shuffled a few more times before he left them flat on the coffee table. “Pick a card, any card.”

She smiled at him, flipping over the card she’d marked. The smile immediately dropped as she turned over a joker instead. Will smiled back, turning over one of the other cards to reveal the one card.

“Like I said,” he said, removing five ones from *her* wallet (fucker) and passed two over to Hannibal’s waiting, outstretched hand. “Easiest con to pull, as long as the mark thinks they

have the edge and you have a partner to pull it off.”

It is four-thirty. The museum is closing soon, the security is at its lowest point throughout the entire day.

Dr. Roehr was expecting a call from his wife any time now.

And Abigail examined the three boxed paintings on the table in the center of the room. One Vermeer, one Degas, and one Botticelli. The Botticelli box had a spot of spilled Gainsborough Neutralizer in the bottom left corner.

She downed her iced coffee, crunched the cup in her hand, and got up to throw it away. The wastebasket was overflowing, and she offered to take out the trash. As she left, she spoke lowly into her earpiece. “Updates.”

“Three minutes for me.”

“Hannibal?”

“He’s reading over the papers now. I should be able to keep his attention for at least ten minutes.”

“*Okay,*” Abigail said, taking the now clean wastebasket back to the archives room. “Keep him busy.” She flashed a smile at Dr. Roehr before sitting back at her laptop. It was the end of the day, and it was just the two of them. She pulled up an incognito tab and accessed Phillip’s personal account. Time to move electric paperwork.

“I think that the museum would be honored to have such a treasure in our collection,” Phillip said, smile a mile wide. Hannibal smiled in return, for completely different reasons.

“However, to accept such a gift without so much as a reimbursement-”

“Think nothing of it,” Hannibal reassured. “It’s a gift, from a benefactor. I don’t need you to give me anything.”

“Not even a down insurance payment? At least a little something.”

“No, really. After all, the banks close, and I have no time to-”

“Just a check?” Phillip offers, a gleam in his eye, sliding a manila envelope across the counter. “Think of it as a - little *thank you* for your continuing contribution to our little gallery.”

Hannibal opens the envelope and smiles after examining the amount written on the check. “Well. I think fair’s fair, don’t you?”

Abigail had just finished creating and hiding the documentation that Phillip had actually purchased the Vermeer from 'Dr. Cartier' when there was a buzz by the loading door. Dr. Roehr went to let them in, and Abigail adjusted her glasses again, brushing her hair back and typed quickly. She pulled up the access to the security cameras.

"How much time will you have?" Hannibal said in a low tone in her earpiece. "I have five minutes."

"That should work out," Abigail murmured back, grabbing her phone as Dr. Roehr led in the driver for the transport company.

Will looked over his aviator glasses to wink in her direction, and she scoffed a laugh. Before Dr. Roehr could get the box, she pressed her call button.

Roehr's phone rang in his office down the hall, and he immediately straightened up. "Excuse me, I need -"

"Yeah, sure, *whatever* man, but I'm on a schedule," Will said, his jaw cracking as he leaned against the doorframe. And as soon as Roehr left the room, Abigail switched off the cameras.

Immediately, they both sprang into action, Will pulling his glasses off and stuffing them in his pocket as Abigail jumped up from her chair and they made their way over to the boxes. Abigail picked up one box, and slid out the Vermeer, and Will removed the other two from their boxes.

One hundred and ten seconds before the guards will get antsy and start investigating

Working almost silently, they swapped out the paintings.

Vermeer, in the the Botticelli box with the stain. Botticelli, in the Degas box.

And the Degas, placed into Phillip's clever *fake* Botticelli box.

Forty seconds.

"And you're sure this -"

"Phillip's master plan is to keep the Botticelli in a fake box in his office, to throw off the thieves he *knows* are coming tonight," Abigail reminds, accepting the roll of packing tape.

"And you've set up-"

"The drop off point is twenty miles away, I've checked the location, and there's no cameras around. And if I just drive off with the painting for myself you'll send everything down to my birth certificate to the police before I'm at the city limits."

"We're clear, great," Abigail smiled, finishing taping her box.

Fifteen seconds.

She rushed back over to her laptop and sat in her chair as Will headed back to the door frame, leaning against it and slipping the sunglasses back on.

Time in.

Abigail turned the cameras back on, and went back to the Lufthansa website for plane tickets right as Roehr came back into the room. "I'm sorry, I thought that my wife had called me. Must have been a glitch, it read as her ID."

"Fascinating," Will drawled, slouching. Roehr rolled his eyes, walking over to the three paintings in boxes. He seemed to hesitate, before picking up the one marked *Degas*, and handing it over to Will.

"Thank you."

"Don't mention it," Will nodded, holding the box carefully as he walked out of the room, and headed down to the truck. Abigail finished with Phillip's insurance forms, and then waited for Roehr to plug back into his Bach, before speaking into her earpiece.

"Are we clear?"

"One more minute," Hannibal murmured, slipping a fake insurance policy into the midst of papers before signing them himself, turning back to Philip with a smile. "Thank you again."

"Thank you, for your generosity, doctor," Philip said, holding the door open for him.

"You're very welcome," Hannibal replied, the lie sliding through his teeth. "Good evening." And then he walked out, manilla enveloped neatly packed into his briefcase. "I'm on my way to the drop-off, be out front in exactly half an hour. And we need to stop by the bank, it needs to go in your account to muddy the waters."

"On it," she nodded, pulling up Lufthansa's and looking at tickets. "Did you want the tickets to Tuscany or Barcelona?"

The pause on the other side of the line is brief, but enough that Abigail rolls her eyes. *Yeah, I'm sure the whole 'flee the country afterwards to wash your hands of the situation' plan kind of slipped your mind when you got in bed with your competitor,* she thought to herself.

Hannibal finally answered, "Whichever is more convenient for you to acquire."

I stopped thinking about it, just pick what you want. "You got it, boss. Yes, I know you hate when I say that."

She ended their conversation to pick up the Botticelli (Degas) box and placed it right in the safe, right where Will said Matthew knew where the painting would be. And as she purchased escape tickets, she watched Rohr check that the Botticelli he picks up has the stain on it (the Vermeer, now) and handed it to Phillip as he walked in. "Your Botticelli, sir. Quick thinking, can you imagine if we'd left it in the safe overnight and it was stolen?"

Abigail hid her smile behind her screen.

Will was just pulling up the back of the truck when he heard the crunching of Bentley tires on the gravel behind him. He grinned to himself, picking up the box and turning to see Hannibal get out of the car. "Got it, doctor. I'm impressed, it went off without a hitch."

"We all played our parts well," Hannibal replied smoothly, looking over Will. Will smirked as he helped Hannibal carefully pack the box into the trunk of the car.

"If you like the deliveryman outfit, you should see me impersonating a cop in uniform."

They're both holding a mutual teasing glare when Abigail's exasperated sigh comes in over the earpieces.

"Do not discuss roleplay over the coms, please."

Abigail smiled at the guard at the front of the museum after her shift was over, and walked down the steps, easily blending in with the crowd when she noticed the Bentley parked a half block down the street. She made her way down, and hopped over the back car door without opening it, flopping back against the entire backseat and laughing.

"Your feet are on the leather," is Hannibal's remark as he taps his fingers against the side of the steering wheel.

"New shoes," she fires back, grinning, and sits back up to put her seatbelt on.

"Nice job," Will compliments, his feet up on the dashboard, aviators still on. She can hear the grin in his voice. "So. What do we do with this painting?"

Hannibal shifts gears and pulls back into traffic. "I was thinking one of my safehouses."

Will turned to look at him incredulously, laughing a little. "You're not selling it?"

"I always thought it would look nice over the fireplace," Hannibal responds, and Will laughs again. Abigail has to laugh, too, and Hannibal even smiles.

Hannibal pulls up outside Abigail's apartment complex, and she hands him an envelope with a plane ticket inside. "I decided on Tuscany." And then she hands Will another envelope, with, surprisingly, another ticket for the exact same flight. He looks up at her in surprise, and so does Hannibal. Abigail rolled her eyes, hopping out of the car. "Saved you the trouble of 'accidentally' ending up on the same plane as us and act all surprised, I'll get you your ID and a passport for later."

"Thanks," Will says, nodding. She nods back, and slides her bag up on her shoulder more.

"Okay, I'm going to celebrate by get trashed on whipped cream vodka and Coke and watch Friends, see you tomorrow."

They all say their goodbyes, and Hannibal turns to Will after Abigail lets herself in. “You’ll have to give me directions.”

Will slides his glasses down his nose and winks. “I’ll make it easy for you: your place.”

Hannibal sends a slow smile in his direction, and his hand slides down to rub Will’s thigh at the stoplight.

Chapter End Notes

Please, please leave all the comments and kudos you like! I love responding to them!

Come visit me on [Tumblr](#)!

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

A little epilogue for our game.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"I swear to fucking God, Graham, you -"

"Oh, sorry, can't hear you," Will said, in an absolutely infuriating tone. "Gotta go, flight's taking off."

"DON'T YOU D-"

Will laughed as he hung up, and Hannibal looked at him through the mirror on the outside of the wardrobe. "Our flight is in three hours, Will. He might have the phone traced."

Will just smiled innocently, dunking the phone in the glass of water on the bedside dresser. "Good luck with that. I've got a different one that he doesn't know about."

"Do you always carry multiple phones?"

"Only when I know I'm going to be fleeing the states and/or country," Will answers back smartly, making sure that he has all of his things packed, locking the suitcase and walking over to where Hannibal was waiting by the door, who was smiling.

"Shall we?"

Will deliberately moves just in the way of the Uffizi docent so the man is forced to bump right into him. He glares, and Will glares right back.

"Excuse you," he says, dripping with sarcasm, and turns back to Hannibal's amused expression. Hannibal moves to take his arm, effortlessly blending them back into the crowd, just more faces in the masses.

"Did you take his identification badge?" Hannibal asks, in a low tone, inordinately fond.

"If he stores it in his wallet, then yeah, guess so," Will fires back, squeezing Hannibal's hand in a teasing way. He rubs the fake wedding ring on his ring finger. The diamond's real, the

sentiment is real, even the *paperwork* is real as Abigail can forge it. It's a shame the multiple arrest warrants don't really allow to file for the actual certificate. "Old habits die hard."

Hannibal pretends to look disapproving, but there's a flicker of amusement in his eyes. "I cannot take you anywhere. You are a menace."

"Careful, doctor," Will says in a low voice so no one in the surrounding galleries can hear, "I have significant leverage against you."

"As do I," Hannibal reminds, and both of them have to smile at the other's ridiculousness. They continue their walk through the gallery, and finally come to a stop in front of Botticelli's *Primavera*. And it's peaceful, sitting on the bench before the painting, enjoying this little slice of domesticity.

They'd fled the States pretty much the afternoon the day after the heist, Abigail meeting them at the airport, shoving a pair of wedding bands in their direction with new fake IDs across the table at the coffee stand.

"Congratulations, you can celebrate when we land," she said dryly, taking a long sip of her iced raspberry mocha. They had both been amused at the time, but since then had not dignified Abigail with the knowledge that she was correct, they'd embrace it soon enough. At the moment, she was in her side of the villa, binging Netflix and prying her way into Interpol's servers.

Will cocks his head to the side, seemingly sizing up the painting and obviously up to no good. "You know, I think this would look nice in the bedroom, over the mantle."

Hannibal plays along, pretending to be annoyed. "Will, the *Primavera* is ten feet wide and six feet tall. It wouldn't even fit above the mantle."

Will pouts, his eyes betraying his real emotions. "Fine," he concedes. Then he adds, "...What about the library?"

Hannibal finally smiles, just on the side of fond. Will leans in and seals it with a kiss. "...you might need to work the inside job," he admits. "My Italian is shit."

"I believe that can be arranged," Hannibal agrees, and squeezes Will's hand once for good measure. With his free hand, he sends a text to Abigail.

Pull up Uffizi cameras and guard schedules.

Abigail hit pause on her *Project Runway* marathon and checked the updates of her password codes as she picked up her phone to answer Hannibal's text, an annoying organ chord the text tone. She rolled her eyes at the message.

Fine, she texted back. Enjoy your date. Bring me some hazelnut gelato for payment.

Chapter End Notes

This was a fun little fic to write! I hope everyone who stuck with it enjoyed it!

Please, please leave all the comments and kudos you like! I love responding to them!

Come visit me on [Tumblr](#)!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!